

Welfare and wellbeing

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The strategic (gold) commander or strategic coordination centre (SCC) should take overall responsibility for health and safety provision across all responders. This is to ensure that provision meets legal requirements and that the processes followed are consistent across each agency, where applicable. This should be communicated to the tactical level of command through the creation of a health, safety, wellbeing and welfare cell. The responsibility for the health, welfare and wellbeing of individual staff from each agency remains with that agency.

Health and safety duties

The strategic (gold) commander should consider whether a health and safety adviser is needed to assist with health and safety risk assessments. These assessments should be recorded in writing.

Plans, assessments and incident response must support the fast identification of hazards and ways to mitigate these hazards at all stages from initial report to recovery. This applies both to the public and to emergency responders.

For example, each emergency service must ensure their personnel have correct personal protective equipment (PPE) within the inner cordon. For police responders, the strategic (gold) commander should ensure that the correct provision is available. The operational (bronze) commander should take responsibility for checking this is implemented. Responders also need to be given adequate health and safety briefings before entering the incident site (or sites).

The strategic commander or SCC has overall responsibility for the joint risk assessment and a shared situational awareness. Responsibility for responders' safety still remains with each agency. Strategic command maintains a two-way flow of information, support and advice between the command structure and emergency responders. This can minimise risk of harm.

Where there are multiple response agencies to an incident, the commanders at the strategic coordinating group (SCG) should ensure that the significant hazards that have been identified are included and mitigated in the safety strategy that the group sets. The section on [local risk](#)

[assessment](#) in the Cabinet Office's [National Resilience Standards for Local Resilience Forums \(LRFs\)](#) can be referred to.

The strategic (gold) commander should also decide jointly in the SCG whether to set up a scientific and technical advice cell (STAC). This is overviewed in the [STAC section](#) of the Civil contingencies APP. The purpose of this cell is to advise the SCG on the assessment of risk in relation to health and safety.

The cell should:

- provide health and safety information, advice and possible recovery solutions
- determine hazards
- support risk assessments and management
- assist with debriefing and organisational learning after the event, where necessary

Where the police are the lead agency, the tactical (silver) commander should implement these actions.

Trauma exposure and wellbeing of officers and staff

Policing involves continuous occupational stressors and exposure to trauma that evidence demonstrates poses a high risk for psychological distress. This risk can be greater for less experienced officers (Ugwi and Idemudia, 2024).

In their systematic review, Ugwu and Idemudia (2024) concluded that an integrated approach to mental health and access to mental health resources tailored specifically to policing should be used. Police staff attending these incidents or events should also have access to appropriate mental health support and intervention.

As such, it is recommended that the strategic (gold) commander considers the following:

- Using situational risk assessments to screen for trauma, requiring a suitable location, equipment and trained practitioners to carry them out. This can be done at the same time as screening for physical injury (go to [Responding to trauma in policing: A practical guide](#) for more information).

- Organisational-level mental health provisions, such as appropriate urgent post-incident early interventions, procedures for supervisors to regularly look out for signs of psychological distress and wider approaches protecting health and safety.
- Individual-level mental health provisions, such as making officers and staff aware of support organisations available to them that are policing-specific, such as [Oscar Kilo](#).

Further relevant details can be accessed in the following places:

- [Health, safety, wellbeing and welfare](#) section of the APP on disaster victim identification (DVI)
- [Responding to trauma in policing: A practical guide](#)
- [Psychological risk management: Introduction and guidance](#)
- [Striking the balance between operational and health and safety duties in the police service](#)

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